

desperately attempted to escape the terror and bleak future certain to return under the rule of the Taliban.

Through the chaos and the panic, the brave men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, who once freed the Nation from the terrorist regime, stood as protectors at the Kabul airport for those who were desperately seeking a way out.

Then, on August 26, a terrorist attack at the airport claimed the lives of 13 of these brave servicemembers who were assisting with the evacuation, marking one of the deadliest days for U.S. forces during the 20-year conflict.

Marine Corporal Daegan William-Tyler Page was one of those killed in action on that day. Daegan was a young man from Red Oak, IA, who truly represents the greatness of our State, our country, and the U.S. Marine Corps in which he proudly served. Daegan may have been just 23 years old, but he died a hero who lived a life of service to his community and to his Nation.

Our hearts go out to those to whom he meant the most: his girlfriend, Jessica; his parents, Wendy and Craig Adelson and Greg and Jenni Page; his grandparents; and his four siblings, Corey, Garrett, Mason, and Emerson, to whom Daegan has always been a hero, even before he became a U.S. marine.

The wounds of war obviously aren't just borne by the warrior. It is the family of the fallen who will carry the scars for a lifetime. The hole left in their lives by the loss of Daegan can never, ever be filled. So let's also keep Daegan's family in our prayers.

Being from Red Oak, IA, I know Daegan's family. I have grown up with Daegan's family. It was my best friend in Red Oak that texted me after that explosion at the Kabul airport. She is the one who told me that Wendy Tye's son Daegan had been killed in this explosion.

So I gave the family time to come together, and that next morning I called Wendy's mother, Peggy. I love Peggy very much. I love their entire family very much, and I told her I was so sorry about the loss of Daegan. And she told me: JONI, just please let everybody know what an amazing young man that Daegan was.

And he was an extraordinary young man. Before we ended our conversation, she said: JONI, give that precious Libby of yours a hug for me, like I used to so many years ago when she was a little girl.

And she said: You never know when you will get that last hug from someone you love.

And, Peggy, I did. I gave my daughter Libby a hug.

So while Daegan was a tough marine—he really was—again, an amazing young man. He was fun, loving, and he had a giant heart and a soft spot for animals. He had three dogs—Shyla, Gracie, and Finn.

Growing up in Red Oak, and then in Omaha, Daegan's commitment to serv-

ice began at a young age as a longtime member of the Boy Scouts.

While he was just a child when the terrorists attacked America on September 11, 2001, after graduating from Millard South High School, he answered the call to serve his country by joining the U.S. Marine Corps.

Daegan's family says that he loved the brotherhood of the Marines and was proud to serve as a member of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA.

Daegan was always a dedicated team member. It didn't matter what it was, but he was dedicated, according to his former hockey teammates who, together, won the Nebraska State championship tournament. Omaha's hockey community has fittingly paid tribute to Daegan by placing hockey sticks on their porches in his memory.

A memorial service to celebrate Daegan's life is being held this Friday at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Omaha.

Like his family, teammates, and fellow servicemembers, we mourn the loss of Daegan, but also honor his heroism and his valor. He has been awarded the Purple Heart for making that ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

His life in Red Oak, IA, and Omaha, NE, and his death, remind us that this world is a very dangerous place with many wishing to do the United States harm. Our protection here at home depends upon the sacrifice and the service of many heroes, those like Daegan.

Let it not be forgotten that thousands of other lives were rescued from pending doom because of the bravery of Daegan and the 12 other servicemembers who lost their lives that day while standing guard to ensure the safe passage of others out of Afghanistan.

While it is heartbreaking that he was taken from this world too soon, Daegan will forever have the gratitude of our Nation.

So Wendy and Greg, and to your families, please accept my heartfelt condolences on the loss of your beautiful son, Daegan. The American people will never forget him, nor will they ever forget his life of service.

Semper Fidelis, Daegan, and god-speed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL DAVID LEE ESPINOZA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in the final days of the U.S. military's presence in Afghanistan, our country suffered a devastating loss. Thirteen servicemembers were killed in a terrorist attack at the airport in Kabul, marking the deadliest day for the U.S. military in more than a decade in that country.

These young men and women, all between the ages of 20 and 31, were taken from loving families—parents, siblings,

spouses, fiancées—even a baby on the way.

In Laredo, TX, on Monday, I had the solemn honor of attending the funeral for one of these heroes and offering my condolences to his family.

U.S. Marine Corps LCpl David Lee Espinoza was only 20 years old when he lost his life last month, but he represented the very best of the Marine Corps, the U.S. military, and the very best of America.

From childhood, he dreamed of serving in the military. He joined the Marines right after high school to serve his country and to protect our freedom. And last month, he made the ultimate sacrifice in service to that mission.

The pride in this young marine and the gratitude for his service and sacrifice was visible throughout the Laredo community. Driving through Laredo from the airport, the streets were lined with folks, including schoolchildren holding up American flags in honor of LCpl Espinoza. Veterans from across the State proudly stood outside the entrance to St. Patrick Catholic Church to pay tribute to their fallen brother. And across the street, a giant American flag hung from the ladder of two fire trucks.

I attended the mass, officiated by Bishop James Tamayo, and paid my respects to David Espinoza's family and other members of his family.

There is nothing we can do to bring back LCpl Espinoza, but we can ensure that his service and sacrifice, and that of the other servicemembers killed that day, will never be forgotten.

I join those across the country who are mourning the loss of their heroes and honoring the sacrifices they have made for our freedoms. To me, one of the most unique things about the U.S. military—this is not just about our freedom. They were protecting the rights and the freedom and the dignity of people on the other side of the planet. Our Nation is forever grateful to these young men and women and their loved ones who made unfathomable sacrifices for our freedoms.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are back in session after a busy August, and we are hitting the ground running in the U.S. Senate.

This week, congressional committees have heard from top Biden administration officials about the disastrous withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan. In the months to come, there will be more questions about the decisions that led to the collapse of that country and how the administration plans to protect the American people from terrorist threats moving forward.

You know, the whole premise of our going to Afghanistan in the first place was to deny vacuums that could be filled by terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS and thus represent a threat to the homeland not only of people in Europe and in the region but also

to the people here in the United States. Some called 9/11/2001 a failure of imagination because we never imagined that terrorists overseas would plan and execute a terrorist attack that would kill 3,000 Americans using 2 airplanes to fly into the World Trade Center.

So now, with the embarrassing and disastrous withdrawal by the Biden administration of our troops from Afghanistan, the question is, How long will it take the terrorists to reconstitute themselves and present a clear and present danger to not only the region but also the continent of Europe and the United States? But for right now, we deserve and the American people deserve answers and accountability. And it is not just these 13 marines who lost their lives in Afghanistan; other American servicemembers have lost their lives and literally their limbs to try to deny a safe haven to terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS.

I worry that they may worry that their sacrifices may have been in vain if, in fact, these terrorists occupy this vacuum which has now been created with a very hospitable Taliban, which was responsible for hosting al-Qaida in the first place. I worry that these troops feel like their sacrifice has been in vain. But I want to assure them that they did what they were asked to do by their Commander in Chief with honor and respect and great personal sacrifice. And no matter what happens going forward, nothing will ever change the respect and the honor that we have for them and their service.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we also have a fast-approaching government funding deadline. To be specific, we have about 16 days before we will be knee deep in a government shutdown unless Congress appropriates money to keep the lights on. Following a year and a half of economic instability, there is no justification to unleash even more uncertainty on our economy and on hard-working American families. Then, on top of that, we are told that our Democratic colleagues intend to pass a \$3½ trillion—probably closer to \$5 trillion—reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill, otherwise known as reconciliation.

You know, during the last year, during the COVID-19 crisis, we worked very well together because we knew this was a national emergency that did not respect political parties or ideology or persons, and we had to do everything we could on an emergency basis to help. But that emergency is quickly getting in our rearview mirror, and our Democratic colleagues seem to be determined to continue to recklessly spend borrowed money that will have to be repaid by the next generation of Americans and to raise taxes to the highest level in recent memory, thus compounding the risk not only of inflation, which is a regressive tax on working families when the food they

put on the table, the gasoline they buy, and the appliances they buy all are seeing prices going up at very quickly escalating levels. There is a real danger that this sort of reckless tax-and-spending spree will have a very negative effect not only on them but also on our economy more generally.

For months, we know our Democratic colleagues have been debating back and forth about how much they are willing to spend on a liberal wish list. The chairman of the Budget Committee initially floated a staggering figure of \$6 trillion.

Now, I never dreamed that in my lifetime—certainly in my service here in the U.S. Senate—I would ever vote for a trillion-dollar bill, but I did during the emergency called COVID-19 because I thought it was necessary. But this kind of reckless spending is not necessary. This is an ideological juggernaut to try to achieve things to transform this country into some western European social democracy—social welfare state.

Well, after months of negotiating amongst themselves, our Democratic colleagues have now settled not on a \$6 trillion figure but on \$3½ trillion. It is still a shocking number. Nonpartisan budget experts, as I indicated, said the actual cost would end up closer to \$5½ trillion, so don't be fooled by this so-called appearance of self-restraint. This plan is chock full of damaging tax hikes, permanent welfare with no work requirements, Green New Deal climate mandates, and a laundry list of socialist policies.

A party-line vote just before the recess laid the groundwork for the biggest government spending bonanza in American history, but now some of our Democratic colleagues are experiencing a little buyer's remorse, perhaps given the rapidly approaching date for the 2022 elections, and they are expressing some remorse or hesitation before swiping the taxpayers' credit card once more.

Senators MANCHIN and SINEMA have both voiced their opposition to the extreme \$3½ trillion figure. Earlier this month, Senator MANCHIN wrote an op-ed explaining why he won't support such irresponsible spending. Our colleagues ought to read it and to consider his arguments. He said Democratic leaders in Congress have proposed passing "the largest single spending bill in history with no regard to rising inflation, crippling debt, or the inevitability of future crises."

The fractures in the reckless tax-and-spending spree aren't just deepening in the Senate; House Democrats are beginning to wring their hands, trying to figure out if they can justify such extreme spending and taxing. And I must say it certainly will require some creative thinking.

Trillions more in borrowing when American families are already being pummeled by inflation; a sweeping amnesty with no effort to control the growing immigration crisis at the

southern border; tax hikes on American families and small businesses—our Democratic colleagues are proposing the most extreme policy proposals that one might imagine in this one massive bill. So getting their Members on board is half the battle, but we are now seeing the internal debates and discussions among Democrats wondering if this is the wisest course of conduct, because there is no doubt about it—this is a massive amount of money, and Democrats are going to have to raise the debt ceiling by themselves if they want to write a check that big.

This is where things get a little kooky. Even though this is a partisan spending spree, our friends across the aisle expect Republicans to join them in raising the debt ceiling, claiming that this should be a bipartisan effort. But it is clear Democrats don't require Republican support. They can attach this credit increase to the tax-and-spending-spree bill and pass it with only Democratic support. The only problem is, they don't really want to own it. They want political cover. They want us to help them pull the pin out of the economic grenade that they are about to toss in the laps of the American people. When this reckless tax-and-spending spree inevitably blows up, they want to be able to blame someone else. They want plausible deniability.

But it is not going to work that way. Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, and folks on our side of the aisle have made it crystal clear on that point for months. If they want to spend alone, they are going to have to address the debt ceiling alone. Our Democratic colleagues can't cut Republicans out of the process when it is convenient and then beg cooperation when they need someone else to blame.

I have no doubt that our colleagues across the aisle will come up with a host of gimmicks to try to get Republicans on board. Some have suggested threatening to shut down the government or withholding critical disaster relief. To be absolutely clear, folks on our side of the aisle do not want a government shutdown. The American people and our economy are already experiencing enough pain. In my State of Texas, we suffered enough natural disasters for me to understand how critical it is to get disaster relief out the door as quickly as possible. Communities impacted by hurricanes and wildfires do not deserve to be treated as political pawns on a chessboard.

If Democrats want to charge \$5½ trillion to the taxpayers' credit card, they will have to increase the credit limit themselves, and they can do it by themselves with the \$3½ trillion social welfare bill, and they can't treat disaster victims and government funding as hostages.

Our Democratic colleagues already went on one partisan spending spree earlier this year—an additional \$1.9 trillion under the guise of providing COVID relief, when only about 10 percent of it actually addressed COVID.